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SUBJECT: NORTHERN IRELAND LEADERS THANK SPECIAL ENVOY DOBRIANSKY

CLASSIFIED BY: Susan Elliott, Consul General, AmConsul Belfast,  
State Department.  
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)  
This cable was cleared by Under Secretary Dobriansky.

¶1. (C) Summary: On January 7-8, Special Envoy for Northern Ireland Ambassador Paula Dobriansky made farewell calls on Northern Ireland political leaders. Everyone paid tribute to the Special Envoy for her efforts during the past two years and praised the role the United States has played in bringing peace to Northern Ireland. Sinn Fein leaders were especially grateful for Dobriansky's support on the issue of devolution of policing and justice, but noted concerns about UK government funding as a potential problem. Sinn Fein also highlighted other concerns, including the problem of former IRA members suspected of crimes who are unable to return to the United Kingdom for fear of arrest. Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) leaders expressed their sincere appreciation for Dobriansky's role in the planning of the May 2008 US-NI Investment Conference. Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Shaun Woodward also made a special trip to Belfast on January 7 on behalf of UK Prime Minister Brown to thank the Special Envoy for her efforts. End Summary.

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Sinn Fein Leaders: "On the Runs" Now A Priority  
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¶2. (C) Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams and Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness praised Special Envoy Dobriansky for her work in assisting with the peace process, particularly the role she played on moving forward the devolution of policing and justice. Adams noted there were other outstanding issues that Sinn Fein would like to resolve, including the status of "on the runs", who are persons charged or suspected of involvement with IRA-related crimes, who would be arrested should they return to Northern Ireland. Adams spoke about the case of Sinn Fein's US Representative Rita O'Hare, who is based in Dublin. O'Hare, who has been "on the run" since 1972, was unable to attend her parents' funerals because she fears returning to Northern Ireland. Adams said situation was absurd since if O'Hare were to win an elected position in Northern Ireland, she likely would be free to return without fear of arrest. Adams and McGuinness provided further examples of problems facing former IRA members, including cases where former prisoners were unable to obtain teaching positions or even obtain a taxi license. McGuinness praised Conservative Shadow Northern Ireland Secretary Owen Patterson as having a very progressive attitude on the issue of ex-prisoners. When asked about obtaining assistance from Woodward, Adams said that he had given up on the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland assisting with this issue, commenting that Woodward "promises everything and delivers nothing." Adams did praise the work the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) has done in clearing names of some persons, allowing them to return home.

¶3. (C) On devolution of policing and justice, McGuinness expressed concern that while everything could come into place legislatively in 2009, DUP First Minister Peter Robinson might say that without adequate funding from the British government, devolution cannot move forward. He lamented that, while work

continues on the mechanics and process of devolution, without adequate funding from the British government, the DUP could stall forward movement on the process.

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DUP Leaders: Praise on Investment Support  
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14. (C) Junior Minister Jeffrey Donaldson and Enterprise, Trade and Investment Minister Arlene Foster conveyed their thanks to the Special Envoy on behalf of the DUP (First Minister Robinson was out of the country). Donaldson noted that Unionism is very interested in ensuring that peace and prosperity continue in Northern Ireland, and thanked the Special Envoy for helping with this. Donaldson told Dobriansky that a delegation of Iraqi politicians had been in Belfast that day, and he was very interested in continuing efforts to share Northern Ireland's lessons with them as well, and in assisting in other conflict areas around the world. Foster thanked the Special Envoy for her efforts to attract investment. She acknowledged that there had been some criticism in Northern Ireland that the May 2008 Investment Conference had not yet produced any new investment, but said her ministry would be countering this by explaining that it would take some time before investments coming out of the conference were set.

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Other Parties Grateful for Special Envoy Role  
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15. (C) The Special Envoy also met with party leaders from the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), the Alliance Party, and Progressive Unionist Party (PUP), and all agreed on the need for the new U.S. administration to maintain the Special Envoy position, saying that the U.S. dimension in Northern Ireland remains very important. (Dobriansky said that she had expressed her strong recommendation to the transition team that the Envoy position be retained.) Alliance Party members noted the positive role President Bush had played in Northern Ireland, and expressed a desire to be involved in President-elect Obama plans for the 2009 St Patrick's Day events. PUP Leader Dawn Purvis told Dobriansky that a recent survey had highlighted an increase in young people identifying themselves as "Northern Irish" instead of Irish or British, a positive indication of a desire to have a Northern Ireland everyone can buy into, and to break from the old sectarian divisions.

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Woodward: Special Visit to Thank Special Envoy  
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16. (C) UK Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Shaun Woodward made a special visit to Belfast January 7 to bid farewell and thank Special Envoy Dobriansky for her efforts during the past two years. He praised her hard work and positive impact on the political and economic situation in Northern Ireland.

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